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REPORT

OF THE

SUPERINTENDING SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF THE

TOWN OF BEDFORD,

FOR

1854-5.

NEW HAMPSHIRE
OCT 28 1897
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1855.

REPORT.

In compliance with the act requiring the Superintending School Committee to report his doings to the town, I respectfully submit the following report:

In their reports, committees are required to present such suggestions on the management of schools, and the subject of education as they many think useful. In proceeding so to do, I would remark that the examination of teachers is among the duties imposed by the statute upon this committee. The law declares that no person shall be employed as a teacher in the public schools, unless such person shall produce a certificate from the Superintending School Committee of the town where such school is to be kept, that he or she is suitably qualified to teach the English language grammatically, and the rudiments of arithmetic and geography, and shall produce satisfactory evidence of good moral character. It provides no exceptions, and allows none. They *shall* produce the prescribed certificate of qualifications; and prudential committees expending the funds of their respective districts contrary to the provisions of the law, render themselves liable to a fine of twice the amount so illegally expended. No matter what difference of opinion may exist as to the utility of this provision; no matter what value may be placed upon the labors required of the superintending committee, the law relating to public schools is entitled to respect and obedience, and cannot be violated with impunity.

In three or four instances the past year, the requirements of the law have not been observed. Teachers not legally qualified have been placed in charge of schools, and allowed to pursue their illegal course through the term, thus by example, teaching the fatal lesson of insubordination to government. Again, prudential committees, in many instances, have neglected to give due notice

to the superintending committee of the commencement or close of their schools, as the law requires, consequently no examination of such schools was made.

In many instances, teachers have been negligent in making their reports to the superintending committee as the law directs. No teacher is entitled to pay for his services until this provision has been complied with. Let the prudential committees, in all cases, withhold the teacher's pay, until they are informed by the superintending committee that they have carefully kept and correctly filled their registers in all respects, which is indispensable in securing a correct report of the schools. The best interests of the community call loudly for a reform in these matters. The voters in every district should see to it that the very best men are selected for their prudential committees, men who have a real interest in the cause of common schools, who not only are competent to select teachers, but who are willing to make reasonable and persevering efforts to obtain a *good* teacher, and not wait for *something* to come along and apply for the school.

Prudential Committees, great responsibilities rest upon you. The welfare of the schools depend much on your fidelity. It devolves on you to select and hire teachers, and this is a matter of the greatest importance. Post up your warrants for the annual school meeting, in season to have your meeting on the first day of March, at sunrise in the morning, then proceed directly to find your teacher. Remember that *good* teachers are to be sought after; they have no occasion to apply for a school. Remember also, that they are engaged early, and therefore to secure one you must bestir yourselves.

Never engage a teacher against whom you know a portion of the district are prejudiced. He may be very learned, and very apt to teach, and yet fail of success in his district. A great deal of the "*no order*" in our schools arises from some misunderstanding, or from some dislike entertained by parents towards the teacher, and spoken of in presence of the children. Be careful in regard to this matter; better yield something of your own convictions to the public good.

Never, in any case, engage the services of a teacher until they produce the prescribed certificate of *good moral character.* Remember that the teacher teaches by example as well as precept, for good or for evil, whether he will or not, and that young pupils will cherish an attachment even towards a *bad* teacher; and with all the confidence they will repose in him, what an amount of mischief he may accomplish in one short term. A distinguished writer has said, "*The school is no place for a man without principle.* Let such a man seek a livelihood anywhere else; or, failing to gain it by other means, let starvation seize the body, and send the soul back to its maker as it is, rather than he should incur the fearful guilt of poisoning youthful minds, and dragging them down to his own pitiable level. If there can be one sin greater than another, on which heaven frowns with more awful

displeasure, it is that of leading the young into principles of error, and the debasing practices of vice."

> "Oh, woe to those who trample on the mind,
> That deathless thing! They know not what they do,
> Nor what they deal with. Man, perchance, may bind
> The flower his step has bruised; or light anew
> The torch he quenches; or to music wind
> Again the lyre string from his touch that flew:
> But for the soul, oh, tremble and beware
> To lay rude hands upon God's mysteries there.

The earnest consideration of every citizen is invited to the subject of the co-operation of parents, and the important influence they may exert upon the prosperity of the schools. That they *do* exert an influence for good or evil, no one doubts. That they *may* exert a powerful influence for *good*, is just as true. It is a general complaint of teachers that parents do not manifest interest enough in the schools to visit them. Says the excellent teacher of the summer term in No. 10, in her report to the committee, "I think there has been some improvement the past term, but not near as much as there would have been had the parents manifested more interest in the school; visited it, and caused their children to attend more regularly. It is well known to those persons who are in any way acquainted with school discipline, that those scholars who have been regular in their attendance at school, are the only ones who do themselves or their teacher credit at the closing examination. Of course, no teacher can complain when sickness or unfavorable weather compels a child to remain at home, but when a child is permitted to absent himself unnecessarily from school, then it is that the teacher has just cause for complaint, for the system by which she is governing and teaching her school is interrupted, and consequently a firm barrier to a successful issue is presented."

Parents, it remains for you to say whether your school shall be successful and profitable, or whether, as in some cases the past year, it shall be worse than worthless. The cause cannot be advanced without your co-operation. The labors of the most faithful, persevering and successful teacher will, in a measure, be unavailing, unless your children see that you feel interested. You cannot expect them to be interested in what they know you are not. If you wish them to improve the advantages of the school, they must be prepared at home. Try, then, the experiment. Not only manifest your interest by a preparation of your children at home, but visit the school frequently to examine its condition and witness their improvement.

This almost total neglect of the schools by parents, renders the position of the superintending committee ten times more embarrassing. In case of failure of the teacher to make the school what it should be, and what it *would* be if parents would do their duty, they are disposed to call the committee to account, whereas the sin lies at their own door.

Last summer, a man hired four colts pastured on a farm some five miles distant. At least once in two weeks he got into his

wagon and drove over to see how his juvenile horses fared. He made minute inquiries of the keeper as to their health, their daily watering, &c. He himself examined the condition of the pasture; and when a dry season came on, he made special arrangements to have a daily allowance of meal, and he was careful to know that this was regularly supplied. The man had four children attending a district school, kept in a small, miserable building, erected at the cross roads. Around this building, on three sides, is a space of land six feet wide — the fourth is on a line with the street. There is not an out house or a shade tree in sight of the building. Of the interior of the house, I need not speak. The single room is, like too many others, with all its apparatus, arranged on the most approved plan for producing curved spines, compressed lungs, ill health, &c. The owner of those colts, the father of those children, has never been into that school house to enquire as to the comfort, health, or mental food dealt out to his offspring. The latter part of summer he was asked who taught his school; his reply was, "I do not know; I believe her name is Parker; but *I have no time to look after school matters!*"

If parents thus neglect their duty, what wonder is it if pupils and teachers, and even committees, neglect theirs? What wonder is it if disorder ensue, the school become worthless, the money expended be worse than lost? Such consequences have followed, the past year in this town, and will follow again if this duty continues to be neglected.

The character of the schools depends, in a very great degree, upon the qualifications of the teachers. While a majority of those engaged in this town the past year, have applied themselves with fidelity to their task, some have merited much more commendation than others. We have had some teachers of the very first order, among whom it gives me pleasuse to enumerate Miss Putnam, Miss Wallace, Miss Prince, and Miss Hilton.

There is another class that deserves high commendation for their fidelity and success. I think they gave universal satisfaction in the districts, and at the closing examination their schools appeared well, and gave evidence of having made good progress. Of this class, I mention Miss McPherson, Miss A. J. Parker, Miss M. E. Parker, Miss Wilkins, Miss Mullett, Mr. Moor, Mr. Clark, and Mr. Gilchrist.

There is still another class that may be composed, for aught I know, of teachers of the first order, but who were unfortunate enough to be employed in those districts, the prudential committees of which were so ignorant or negligent of their duties, that they gave no notice of the close of their schools, and some of them of the commencement. I hope those committees did not "*solemnly swear that they would faithfully discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on them as such.*" Of this class of teachers are Miss French, Miss Richardson, Miss Ferguson, Mr. Wallace, and Mr. Brown.

There is yet another class, who "*began to build, but were not able to finish.*" Of this class, are Mr. Tibbetts, Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Roby, Miss Giles, and Miss Whitney.

District No. 1. This district has at present but few scholars, so few that it was thought best to expend all the money for a long term in the winter. Miss Annah J. Hilton of Deerfield, was engaged for the term. Why she was not continued in her place through the term, I am unable to conjecture. The literary qualifications of this lady were, I think, equal to those of any other teacher, and as a disciplinarian, she has no superior. I was unable to visit her school at the commencement, but at the close, the school gave evidence of having made good progress, and appeared to be managed with excellent skill and judgment. She seemed to have no difficulty in settling the question, "How far shall I help the pupil, and how far shall the pupil be required to help himself." They had evidently been taught to depend upon their own resources. What had been learned had been thoroughly learned, and it is evident that the school might have been protracted to the advantage of the learners.

The winter part of the term was assigned to B. F. Wallace, Esq., of Manchester. The committee was not notified of the close of the term, and no return has been made to the committee. I can only say that, judging from a short visit near the commencement of the term, good results would probably follow the labors of the "veteran teacher."

District No. 2. *Summer.*—This school was placed under the care of Miss Helen M. Putnam of Amherst, a young lady who had previously taught in this town with good success. Under very unfavorable circumstances she commenced her task. She found not only a dirty, uninviting school room, but a backward, dull school, poorly supplied with books. But amidst obstacles, toils and disappointments, she nobly sustained her courage, and by persevering effort, and untiring exertions, succeeded in arousing the interest of her classes and stimulating them to exertion.

By the register, it seems that the attendance of the scholars has been very irregular. The whole number of scholars was 38, while the average attendance was but 18, showing a loss to the district, from the absence of scholars, of more than half of the whole school term. This is greatly to be lamented. Will old No. 2 be willing to suffer such a waste of time and funds? This school was kept ten weeks at an expense of thirty-five dollars; had the scholars attended constantly, this faithful teacher could have accomplished more in half of the time, thus saving much in the time of the scholars, and more than seventeen dollars of the funds of the district. In a school where such a state of things exists, it is impossible for the best teacher to secure the order and regularity in the exercises essential to good improvement.

The committee was happy to observe at the closing examination, that no special preparation had been made for the occasion, that she was willing it should be made a fair representation of the actual condition of her school. The recitations were prompt and accurate, and all the exercises were every way commendable.

Winter.—A new era has at length dawned upon this district. After living in peace from time almost immemorial, they have at length "got by the ears." The prudential committee saw fit to place in charge of this school, Mr. Abel Fletcher of Litchfield, against whom he knew a part of the district were prejudiced, and against whom he knew war would be declared on his entrance into the district. The consequence is, eighty dollars are worse than thrown away, the school advanced ten degrees backwards, and a barrier to the prosperity of the school presented that will not be easily removed. But the people *willed it to be so*, and "*let the people rule.*"

In regard to the literary qualifications of this gentleman, he stands in the front rank of teachers, but the ability to secure and maintain order in school, is a qualification that he does not possess. No man can govern others till he has learned to govern himself. If an individual is not perfectly self-possessed, his decision must fail to command respect. From the nature of his temperament, and his past experience, he ought to have known that he was not the man for this school.

After the expiration of eight weeks, I deemed it to be my duty to dismiss this teacher, and did dismiss him, (curses and threatenings to the contrary, notwithstanding,) he himself admitting the justness of such a course. He says in a note to me in his register:

"To the Superintending Committee, Sir:

Permit me to say, that the sentiments expressed in your order of Jan. 2, that "I do not possess the requisite qualifications for a useful teacher of said school," I do most cordially concur in, *under the circumstances, chiefly external from the school itself*, in which I have been placed.

Respectfully, your friend and servant,

ABEL FLETCHER."

This school was resumed under the direction of B. F. Wallace, Esq., and is now in session.

District No. 3. *Summer.*—This school was placed under the care of Miss A. Jane Parker of Merrimack. This was her first attempt in this department, and it was successful. She devoted her time and talents to the work, and aimed to discharge her whole duty. Her kind, yet dignified intercourse with her school, ensured both the love and improvement of the scholars. This school was such as the committee delights to visit. The cordial smile with which he was ever greeted, like the genial beams of the spring day sun, spoke words of welcome, and those cheerless mists which often hover in a school room, were strangers here.

This school now sustains a high reputation. The interest manifested by a portion of the people in the welfare of their school, has, no doubt, aided greatly in securing its prosperity.

The winter term was placed in charge of Miss Fanny W. Wallace of Nashua. Could every member of the district have been

present at the closing examination, I think they would readily join with me in saying they have been fortunate in the selection of their teacher. Certainly Miss Wallace is a superior teacher. The ability to secure and maintain order without effort, is a prominent qualification of this teacher. We can generally do what we firmly believe we can do. She had no doubt in her ability to maintain good order. She says in her register, "by stating to the scholars what I mean by *good* order, then explaining the reasons why it should be preserved, and lastly, by a straight forward course, showing them that *I am determined to have it*," was the means by which *good* order was secured.

The exercises at the close of this school were all of a high order. In no school have recitations been so prompt and thorough. The classes in all the branches demeaned themselves in a very acceptable manner. The scholars appeared thoroughly versed as far as they had advanced, and were absolute masters of their subjects. Original compositions from a class of young ladies gave an additional interest to the exercises, both summer and winter. Declamations from the lads and misses, that would have done honor to higher institutions, closed the services.

When the district gets their new house, this will be the *banner* district.

District No. 4. *Summer.*—No teacher was presented to be qualified for this school—no notice was given of the commencement of the term—no notice of the close—no return to the committee—"*no nothing.*"

Winter. Miss M. Elizabeth Parker of Merrimack, was placed in charge of this school. The interest in the cause of education in this district, if there ever was any, has all died out. The miserable concern they call their school house, is little better than a horse stable,—a contracted, uncomfortable, dirty place, fitted to excite disgust rather than please the taste; to degrade rather than elevate the mind. No wonder it suffers violence by the hands of those who occupy it; the wonder is they don't bring their axes and demolish it. An excellent writer on the subject says, "The school room should compare well with the dwelling houses in the town, and with the best parts of them. The principle is, that the outward state or condition, in respect to taste, should correspond to that which is within. Most of the children who attend school are brought up amidst the conveniences and refinements of civilized life; and their tastes have been involuntarily improved by the very circumstances of their existence. They have a right to expect that the place whither they are sent for the cultivation of their minds, should be of a style and character at least equal to what they are accustomed to at home. In a good school room there is a moral power which is one half of the government of the school. On the other hand, the roughest and most ungovernable schools are kept in miserable, disgusting school houses."

After a term of twenty-two weeks, if Miss Parker succeeded in

bringing her school out of this miserable den in as good a condition as they entered at the commencement, she has done well.

District No. 5. *Summer.*—This school was placed under the care of Miss M. Elizabeth Parker of Merrimack. From indications at the opening examination, and the universal testimony of the district, there can be no doubt that the school has been profitable. The school was not visited at the close, owing to the negligence of the prudential committee, in not performing all the duties incumbent on him, as he had solemnly promised to do.

Winter.—This school was under the direction of Mr. Gilman D. Moor, a young gentleman of good literary attainments, who bids fair to become a successful and useful teacher. Perhaps it would be better if he were a little more on his guard in his intercourse with his scholars, both in and out of the school room. The language of a teacher should be both pure and accurate ; all vulgar jesting, all low allusions should be forever excluded from his mouth. The appearance of this school was good, and the teacher is entitled to much commendation for his success.

District No. 6. The summer term of this school was placed in charge of a teacher who made no application for a certificate.

The winter term was placed under the care of Mr. William B. Tibbetts of Manchester, a professional man. The literary qualifications of this gentleman justified high expectations of his success, but those expectations were sadly disappointed. To leave the school before the expiration of the term, was the most commendable act of his during the session.

District No 7. *Summer.*—This school was placed in charge of Miss Sophia B. McPherson, a member of the district. It might have been owing to this, and want of confidence in herself, that her discipline was not quite as good as could be wished. She, however, deeply felt the responsibilities of her station, and aimed to perform every duty. In regard to her literary qualifications, she is competent to teach any of our common schools.

It was noticed at the closing examination that many of the scholars were absent, on account of sickness in the district, as I am informed, therefore the exercises were not so interesting as they otherwise would have been.

The winter term, under the direction of Mr. John W. Clark of Manchester, was decidedly successful. The school was well conducted. All the branches were thoroughly and correctly taught. The first class in Adams's Arithmetic would do honor to any academy in the State. A class, in number small, gave very intelligent answers in algebra.

If Mr. Clark would maintain the dignity of the teacher's profession in his intercourse with his pupils, in a little higher degree, he would rank among our first teachers.

District No. 8. This a good school. The district displayed a correct taste in the location and internal arrangement of their

school house. It is one of the best constructed and the pleasanest school room in town.

The summer term of this school was under the care of Miss Sarah E. Mullett, a teacher whose abilities have before been tried in this and other towns. The closing examination of this term furnished evidence that the school had been well conducted. Perhaps the practice of helping along the pupil in his recitations, by asking what are called "*leading questions*," is a fault in this teacher. I know it is a common way of helping a dull pupil out of difficulty, but it is a method of stupefying the mind. No teacher should practice it; they should require the scholar to do the talking at recitation. Why should the scholar study, if he knows by experience that the teacher will relieve him from all embarrassment?

Winter.—This school was in charge of Mr. Charles K. Gilchrist, of Goffstown. It was visited by the Commissioner, and pronounced one of the best in the county. Mr. Gilchrist is certainly an active and enterprising teacher. Whatever his hands find to do, he does with his might. He felt proud of his school, and well he might. The orderly and scholar-like behavior, the industrious habits and correct recitations of the scholars, place this school in the front rank. The exercises at the close of this term were highly interesting, and made more so by the presence and remarks of my predecessor.

District No. 9. *Summer.*—This school was placed in charge of Miss Marion Whitney, who after an extraordinary long term of *three weeks*, suddenly disappeared. The cause of her sudden exit, or what ever became of her, I *know nothing* about. Whoever will give information on the subject, will oblige her anxious friends.

Winter.—Miss Sarah H. Prince of Amherst, was placed in charge of this school. The reputation of this lady, as a successful teacher, renders comment unnecessary. Every body knows her to be a teacher of the first order, and that accounts for the rush to secure her services. To say that this term was decidedly successful, is unnecessary. Her schools all "*speak for themselves.*" This school was also visited by the Commissioner.

District No. 10. The summer term of this school was in charge of the lady above alluded to — Miss Prince — who has repeatedly taught with such excellent success in this town. This school too was successful. The prudential committee was unfortunate in not securing her services for the winter term, which he might have done had he applied in season.

The closing examination was made interesting by the presence of many of the ladies of the district, the gentlemen having no time to attend to school matters.

The winter term was under the direction of Mr. Roby of Mont Vernon. What he would have accomplished, had he remained through the term, nothing human can tell! but it is evident there was an "*itching*" in a portion of the district, to get rid of him.

Whether he left from this cause, or some other, I have not been officially informed.

District No. 11. The school house being in Merrimack, and most of the scholars from that town, I respectfully refer the citizens of the town to the report of the superintending committee of Merrimack. It is unfortunate for this district that it has within its borders an interesting class of individuals, who, if they cannot have the entire control of matters in regard to the selection of teachers, hesitate not to make themselves perfectly ridiculous, in their silly attempts to destroy the usefulness of the school, and their cowardly attacks on the characters of the innocent, defenceless female teachers. "O, shame! where is thy blush?"

District No. 12. This school is not only the twelfth in number, but in rank. It is at least twelve years behind the times, with no present prospect of advancing.

The summer term of this school was committed to the care of Miss Emma N. French, a member of the district. The school was visited at the commencement, but what ever became of it afterwards, I cannot say. As no notice was ever given of its close, we may infer that it is yet in operation.

The winter term was placed in charge of Miss Lizzie A. Giles. She labored under the disadvantage of being very young and inexperienced, and perhaps lacked that energy and activity that is needful to render recitations animated. I think she acted wisely in relinquishing her school.

The school was again resumed under the direction of Mr. Brown of Amherst, a successful teacher, and is now in operation.

Union District. This little school now ranks among the first in town. The interest taken in the school by members of the district, and their practice of selecting their best men to the office of prudential committee, is the secret of their prosperity. Their example is worthy of imitation.

The summer term, under the direction of Miss Martha J. Page of Manchester, was successful. Although young in years, and inexperienced, I think Miss Page is destined to be one of our good teachers. Her literary qualifications are of a high order.

The winter term of this school was placed in charge of Miss Lucy A. Wilkins of Merrimack, an active, energetic and successful teacher. At the closing examination, this little school appeared remarkably well. Order and discipline pervaded the school. The progress made in the several branches was considerable. The school was doing so well that the district could well have afforded to continue it some weeks longer.

This school was visited by the Commissioner, and favorably noticed.

ELIJAH C. STEVENS,
Superintending School Committee.

Bedford, March 2, 1855.

STATISTICS.

Table of the Teachers, Numbers of Scholars, &c.

District.	Term.	Teachers.	Wages and Board.	No. of Weeks.	No. of Scholars.	Males.	Females.	Average attendance	Amount of Money.
1	1	Miss Annah J. Hilton.	40 00	10	18	6	12	15	
	2	Benj. F. Wallace, Esq. [No return.]							92 71
2	1	Miss Helen M. Putnam.	36 00	10	38	25	13	18	
	2	Rev. Abel Fletcher.	69 12	8	45	29	16	31	
	3	Benj. F. Wallace, Esq. [No return.]							152 51
3	1	Miss A. Jane Parker,	28 00	14	24	8	16	19	
	2	Miss Fanny W. Wallace.	35 00	12	27	13	14	19	113 92
4	1	Miss Ferguson. [No return.]							
	2	Miss M. Elizabeth Parker.	54 00	22	30	11	14	25	149 61
5	1	Miss M. Elizabeth Parker.	15 75	9	14	6	8		
	2	Mr. Gilman D. Moore.	42 00	12	22	12	10	18	60 50
6	1	Miss Margaret A. Richardson.	15 00	10	14	6	8	12	
	2	Mr. William B. Tibbetts.	50 00	8	17	9	8		84 30
7	1	Miss Sophia B. McPherson.	24 00	12	24	9	9	18	
	2	Mr. John W. Clark.	66 00	13	22	9	13	17	105 02
8	1	Miss Sarah E. Mullett.	21 00	12	25	8	17	17	
	2	Mr. Charles K. Gilchrist.	60 00	12	40			31	112 70
9	1	Miss Marion Whitney.	12 00	3	18	8	10	14	
	2	Miss Sarah H. Prince.	42 60	10	24	12	12	21	68 48
10	1	Miss Sarah H. Prince.	27 00	12	31	14	17	27	
	2	Mr. Kilburn H. Roby. [No return.]							97 30
11	1	Miss Lucy A. Wilkins. [No return.]							*
	2	Miss A. Jane Parker.	49 00	14	8	2	6	3	44 07
12	1	Miss Emma N. French. } No re-							
	2	Miss Lizzie A. Giles. } turns.							
	3	Mr. Leonard J. Brown. }							76 98
Union.		Miss Martha J. Page.	10 00	8	8	5	3		*
		Miss Lucy A. Wilkins.	30 00	10	13	9	4	11	25 12

*United with a district in another town.

BOOKS.

A list of all the books used in the Common Schools in Bedford :

Reading Books. Town's Series of Readers ; Tower's first and second books ; American School Reader.

Spelling Books. North American Spelling Book.

Geography. Smith's Quarto ; Mitchell's Primary.

History. Goodrich's United States History.

Grammar. Wells's Grammar.

Arithmetic. Colburn's Arithmetic ; Emerson's do. ; Holbrook's do. ; Adams's do. ; Greenleaf's do.

Algebra. Davies' Algebra.

Mensuration. Adams's Mensuration.

Physiology. Cutter's Physiology.

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